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Local Pharmacist Gets 2011 Public Health Award

Ron Bergum, pharmacist and owner of Bergum Drug in Helena, was presented with the 2011 Public Health Award Wednesday during a celebration of National Health Center Week.

“It’s always very flattering to be recognized,” Bergum said. “But this probably is more a reflection on my employees. I’m blessed with good employees, and the staff and patients of the CHC have been great to deal with.”

The award has been given annually since 2004 by the Cooperative Health Center (CHC) in Helena. It goes to organizations or individuals who have helped the CHC carry out its mission of providing primary health, dental, and mental health care to all Lewis and Clark County residents, regardless of their ability to pay.

Bergum was selected for the award because his drugstore dispenses low-cost medicines to CHC patients under the 340B Drug Pricing Program managed by the federal Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), according to Kate McIvor, CHC executive director. Participants in the program provide discounts of 20-50 percent to “safety-net providers” like the CHC.

“Without Ron’s help, many of our patients would not be able to afford their medications,” said Dr. Will Snider, CHC medical director.

He noted that some community health centers across the nation have onsite pharmacies, but CHC is too small to support one.

“Bergum Drug is the only independent pharmacy in Helena,” he said, “and Ron Bergum is committed to the health of CHC patients. Because of that, the pharmacy is willing and able to charge CHC patients only a small handling fee for 340B medications.”

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